The People´s Health Movement (PHM)

Analysis of the activities of MSP in Ecuador



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Ganar en Salud...
Equipo ComunicándoNOS

Frente Nacional por la Salud de los Pueblos del Ecuador



The author Juergen Kraus -a German political specialist- was in Ecuador for two months in 2010. He visited members of social organizations, activists and MSP-E structures in Cuenca, Guayaquil, Riobamba and Quito. He also attended various activities of the anti–mining movement. With the aid of interviews conducted with activists and representatives of MSP-E and other social organizations, and by analyzing several previous publications of the MSP- E, the author tries to portray a synopsis of the current situation and ongoing work of MSP Ecuador.

The author hopes the following summary will bring attention from the People´s Health Movement global network and will promote the exchange of information between different countries where the Right to Health and Health Care Campaign is currently ongoing. Juergen Krauss wants to contribute to strengthen MSP structures and hopes the information presented herein will prove useful to people from different sectors working in health in order for them to learn more about MSP-E and to support its work. This material can also prove useful as an example on how to collect similar information in other countries where struggles towards Health for All are taking place.

















INTRODUCTION

Savar - Bangladesh and Cuenca - Ecuador were two very important places in the genesis and development of the People's Health Movement. The People´s Charter for Health adopted and ratified at these events, is a major strategic, programmatic and political tool that calls different social actors to struggle for health as afundamental human right.

Cuenca´s Declaration establishes " The right to health will be achieved through large scale popular mobilization. PHM will initiate or support struggles related to the right to water, food security and food sovereignty, a healthy environment, dignified work, safe housing, universal education and gender equity, since people's health depends onthe fulfillment of these basic rights."

In this context and considering this momentum, in 2004, the National Front for the People´s Health - Ecuador (FNSPE) was started. FNSPE was constituted by "community and neighborhood leaders, housewives,health workers, teachers, students, and health professionals". Its purpose was the development of proposalsto restore and reaffirm the universal right to health in the Ecuadorian context. FNSPE also sought to share experiences and engage with various social movements with a common vision of change and with themission to contribute to social transformation. In this social transformation "the community is no longer the object and becomes the subject and social actor, capable of deliberation in the formulation of policies andcapable to make decisions regarding their health problems"

In his work, Juergen Krauss, summarizes PHM Ecuador´s work, starting from the Second People´s HealthAssembly. This is an Important and well-done accomplishement, in a country of great social and political conflicts that has confronted both: the organised popular movement on one side and the capital forces of both domestic and external origin, engaged in the implementation of neoliberal policies, on the other. This is astage in which the desire for change is expressed in the struggle for change; it is a period of achievements in the development of the political consciousness of Ecuador´s peoples who seek for alternatives in progressive proposals and who seek to reaffirm their struggle for deeper changes, even when such struggles have been betrayed by Rafael Correa´s government.

In this context, the aforementioned research describes the events in the construction of the FNSPE, its strengths and weaknesses, its limits and political and organizational potentials. It also details valuable initiatives and actions developed by PHM Ecuador, such as having Health as a Human Right included in the New Constitution and the conformation of ReAct Latin America (Action against Bacterial Resistance) by theFaculty of Medical Sciences of the University of Cuenca.

The struggle for Health as a Human Right, even when included in the New Constitution, is a continuous struggle for PHM Ecuador.
The following pages also collect the experiences of the Peasants Social Insurance, the FEUNASSC as an organization that defends the right to health of the Peasants Social Insurance members; the work of theIntercultural Coordinating Committee towards people´s health and social participation and initiatives such asthe Health Action Network initiated in the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar. A recent action with great social and political relevance is the anti mining struggle that takes place in the South of the country. PHM and FNSPE have provided important support in the resistance against mining.

Among the challenges identified by the current work, the need for a new agenda for PHM Ecuador given the new context characterized by the government´s lack of political will and the need to develop new strategiesfor strengthening the organizational structure of FNSPE, are the most important.
Undoubtedly, this analysis will

Undoubtedly, this analysis will be very useful for all the social sectors involved in the health field and willcontribute to the overall strengthening of the People's Health Movement.

Ramiro Vinueza Puente
Director of the newspaper "Opinión".

FOCUS OF THE ANALYSIS

The People´s Health Movement (PHM) –or Movimiento por la Salud de los Pueblos (MSP)- is a global network constituted by different social movements in the area of politics in health.
The common goal is the acknowledgement of health as a human right. To pursue this right, various regional and global activities are organized to improve access to health care services and to reinforce the demands at the political level for an integral health and for social determinants of health.

The following text is an analysis of the structures of MSP-E, and offers an example on how the network is functioning at the national level. Ecuador hosted the Second People´s Health Assembly in 2005. It was an important meeting for the process of the global network and for MSP in Ecuador.

With the Assembly as the initial point, the analysis looks at the activities of MSP-Ecuador, the different campaigns of its social organizations and the relationship between the network and its collaborating movements. Logically, MSP work depends on national politics´ scenario and the structure of health services countrywide. This justifies the analysis of MSP within a framework of central political processes. Moreover, the analysis illustrates the problems that MSP faces in order to establish permanent structures and continuous activities.



1

The Peoples of the World ended the neoliberal tale

Cuenca´s Assembly became a universal meeting of all the ways of solidarity, compassion and struggle. Added to the richness that allowed us to share many and varied ways of organization; the possibility of closely experiencing the beauty of different cultures expressed in this event; to attend the meeting meant for us, a reloading of batteries, a global demonstration that the rebel spirit and the collective conscience have not died; that we are leaving behind us the silence of our peoples that in the nineties seemed to have settled with the injustices done to their health and their rights.

(Jaime Breith. Center for Studies and Advisory in Healht. CEAS. Pg 8-9. Voices of the Earth . Cuenca-Ecuador. January 2007.

THE SECOND PEOPLES HEALTH ASSEMBLY:

AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW AND TO LEAR N FROM OUR OWN EXPERIENCE.



From July 17th to 22nd, 2005, more than a thousand delegates of the global network Movimiento por la Salud de los Pueblos (MSP) met in the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the University of Cuenca, during the Second People´s Health Assembly. Five years after the First Assembly in Bangladesh, scientist and health workers, social movements' representatives and aboriginal peoples, met in Ecuador, to develop strategies that promote "Health for all". In this Assembly, the importance of the Declaration for the Peoples Health - a call for action for the worldwide population that includes the struggles for freedom, dignity and health*- was reaffirmed and continues to be the network main document.

(Find the declaration annexed. Also in www.phmovement.org/files/phm-pch-spanish.pdf, www.phmovement.org/files/phm-phc-english.pdf)







Debates in workshops and plenary were conducted, within diverse themes as: poverty and health, militarization, environmental degradation, traditional medicine, health and interculturality.

Also, special events such as the first session of the International Peoples ´Health University (IPHU) and the launch of the Alternative Report: Latin-American Health Watch took place. In the program, we tried to promote that the main voices heard were the most sensitive and vulnerable human groups voices, including the "voices of all the men and all the women"

(Quizhpe Peralta/Hamlin Zúmiga 2006)





"Through the activities during the assembly, such as the IPHU, fellow peers from different movements participated. During the following years, each international event was central to achieve mutual motivation and exchange learning experiences. There are many possibilities for action for the Movement, because no one is alone, only fighting in different countries towards the same objectives, and knowing what is happening in other countries".

(Edgar Isch, FNSPE y MPD, Quito)





With focus on Ecuador, the Assembly expressed International solidarity with the national struggles: with peasant communities, which had defended their land; with the indigenous movement that was fighting for participation in political decisions, participation in the social security system and to maintain their culture and identity. Finally, the World Assembly in Cuenca not only was a big event that required a lot of preparation and work of the Secretary, but also was an occasion to strengthen the structures of MSP Ecuador.



2

Own the defense of individual and collective life.

Men and women, who have not lost yet their true human essence, can only respond positively to the call of those who struggle for life. This is why we make our own, Celia Iriarte´s words: we must own the commitment to build a new mindset that opposes to the "naturalization" of our current situation as the only way possible. It is necessary to own the defense of individual and collective life, LIFE with capital letters, which goes beyond the biologist vision to expand the horizon in search of human construction in its broader conceptualization. The idea is calling ourselves out of this "sweet certainty" of the worst which enslaves us, to take the risk to think about freedom. (Quizhpe/Calle 200: Health, the transforming power of life).

(Quizhpe/Calle 200: Health, the transforming power of life).

THE COLLECTIVE CONSTRUCTION OF A NETWORK AS A BASIC STEP TO SUSTAIN THE MOVEMENT

MSP Ecuador belongs to the global network People's Health Movement (PHM) and to the regional network MSP Latin-America (msplatinoamerica@gmail.com).

Latin American network has its coordination office in Nicaragua; along with several communication centers. From Ecuador, ComunicándoNOS office, located in the city of Cuenca, is responsible to establish communication with MSP MSP Latin-American network.



ComunicándoNOS team is a group with expertise in the construction of edu-communicational and audiovisual material. It has two partially paid workers and various activists who support the realization and construction of products and campaigns (contact: comunicamspsud@yahoo.com).







ComunicándoNOS office is the headquarters of the national network. According to Jorge Quizhpe, communication coordinator of MSP Ecuador, ComunicándoNOS has five goals:

- Selecting and disseminating information to Latin America MSP network, member organizations, allies and friends of MSP.
- Produce materials regarding health, people's mobilization and changes in health policies in Ecuador.
- Produce promotional and educational material, such as: videos, books and radio serials, and distribute them between Latin-America and Ecuador networks.
- Develop participatory communication strategies
- Support training processes for popular and community communicators.

The office is managing two web pages: the web page of the global network in Spanish www.phmovement.org/es and the web page of the magazine PIJUANO www.pijuano.blogspot.com . The office tries to establish and maintain collaborations with social movements, peasants and indigenous peoples in struggle, both in Ecuador and other Latin American countries.





"We are in the communication network of Latin America MSP. We work together with equipment and offices in different countries, as Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia and Nicaragua. From this relationship and common articulation, we strive to strengthen networks and social fabric, as well as progress in the collective construction of educational communication products. Also sometimes we became reporters, when something happens in other countries; we contact a person from MSP network who can send all the information about what is happening there. That is the way in which we support each other.

(Jorge Quizhpe, ComunicándoNOS, Cuenca).

Medical Sciences Department and the MSP

The Medical Sciences Department in Cuenca (FCCMM) plays an important role in MSP Cuenca. Dr. Arturo Quizhpe Peralta, a physician, professor and MSP activist who was the General Coordinator of the People´s Health Assembly (PHA) in 2005; is also the Department´s Dean. Many researchers and practitioners who are committed to social medicine and MSP objectives work at FCCMM. Due to the existence of this democratic space which is committed to collective health, conferences and seminars take place, facilitating academic debates on topics such as the right to health, social determinants and critical epidemiology. Another objective of FCCMM is to include the aforementioned topics in the training of future health workforce.







The Nursing School is part of FCCMM and was one of the organizational pillars in the preparation of PHA 2005. According to the Director Maria Merchan, the school is offering an alternative training in nursing. The instruction includes aspects of social medicine in the curricula and internships in rural communities and urban neighborhoods. With this program the Nursing School contributes to the training of health workers based on comprehensive health.

Central Office of ReAct Latin America is located in the FCCMM in Cuenca, ReAct is a network of researchers in the field of bacterial resistance, who work in scientific projects regarding the effects of antibiotics abuse in medicine and in stockbreeding. The research is also focused on new therapeutic options from a public health perspective, on Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and on concepts of the re-construction of ecosystemic health.



Adding to the teams working in Cuenca, React has more groups in other parts of the Azuay province and in neighboring provinces. Community workers work in local committees supporting them in the articulation of the needs and demands of communities, as well as in the strengthening of people´s participation on health programs. MSP has started Inter parish Coordinators that conduct research in communities and support the training of community health workers.

MSP Militancy is represented by the National Front for the Health of the Peoples Ecuador (FNSPE). Starting on 2004 as a platform for all the "fronts" (laborers organizations from different sectors) united under the theme of health. The Presidency is located in Guayaquil. FNSPE has teams in fourteen provinces that carry out demonstrations, actions for popular demands, activities in neighborhoods with inadequate healthcare services and campaigns with other organizations to claim the right to health in the labour context.



One of the weaknesses of MSP Ecuador is its invisibility in Quito. Although there are people from left parties in various organizations and universities that have collaborated with the network on specific projects; there are no solid structures to coordinate activities of the MSP in the capital. The same problem occurs in other provinces of the country. After its inception, FNSPE has expanded its organizing efforts to fourteen provinces but have failed to maintain its activities on them all. However, some associations such as the Peasants´ Social Security affiliates (SSC), who have their own platform called FEUNASSC, are considered part of the MSP.



3

Our proposal to health and decent living for the peoples is based on the principles of integrity, solidarity, universality, equity, justice, dignity and social participation, which should permeate the distribution of wealth and social, economic, cultural policies: it is also based on the full enjoyment of human rights and the preservation and respect for nature. This will lead to a healthy society where people enjoy life and have a full development.

(National Front for the health of the peoples Ecuador. 2005)

THE CONCEPT OF HEALTH AND THE DEMANDS OF MSP ECUADOR.

demands of the MSP Ecuador
To achieve health, the specific demands of MSP Ecuador are:

- Universal access to comprehensive health care.
- Coverage of basic health infrastructure by the Ecuadorian State
- Eliminate the privatization of public health services
- Changes in the state budget and increase in health and education budget
- Prevention programs, especially in cancer and sexually transmitted diseases
- Food sovereignty and social security for everyone
- Programs and mechanisms for social participation to make autonomous decisions
- Development of a national pharmaceutical industry for generic drugs.
- Link the health system with traditional medicine and the knowledge of indigenous peoples
- implement programs for occupational health protection, taking into account occupational risks, as well as specific programs for people with disabilities
- Establish public geriatric care centers where specialized care is provided to older adults in va rious aspects of their life and health. (Solis/Quizhpe/Calle 2007: Health, the transforming for ce of the life).

(Solíz/Quizhpe/Calle 2007: Salud – La fuerza transformadora de la vida)

Health must be guaranteed by the state

Health as a right must be guaranteed by the state through public policies that guarantee the full exercise of this right and the access to health services for all people, regardless of their economic status. Health goes beyond the offer of health services by the State. Health needs a life of dignity, without violations of other rights such as housing and nutrition, with healthy ecosystems and a preserved nature. Therefore, fight for health for all means to fight for healthy circumstances in daily life:

"Everyone is entitled to a standard of living adequate for health and wellbeing for the individual and families, including food, clothing, shelter and medical care. In addition, there is the entitlement to needed social services and the right to social security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack in their lives due to circumstances beyond their control"

(Soliz/Quizhpe/Calle 2007).



An integral vision of healthy ecosystems includes healthy and fair economic relationships:



"Health is the result of the conditions and the quality of life of people; it is closely related with nature, forms of work and consumption. It is a social, economical and political matter. Inequality, poverty and exploitation, violence and injustice are the root of ill health and death. Therefore, the State must ensure to the entire population an offer of health services with a holistic and comprehensive view based on the respect for human and environmental rights, considering cultural, gender and age diversity".

Soliz/Quizhpe/Calle 2007).

This view of health is the basis of the political work of MSP Ecuador. The network is actively denouncing the destruction of nature and the pollution resulting from the exploitation of natural assets. Those actions are especially important in Ecuador, a country that generates its income by exporting raw materials. Fumigations in banana, cacao and other agricultural products; the spills produced during oil extraction; the pollution of rivers with heavy minerals in mining areas, threatens the health of the Ecuadorian population and particularly the poor and vulnerable.

MSP rejects the industrial development model, free trade and the power of multinational corporations. On the other hand, MSP is supporting social movements, peasants and indigenous people who are struggling against the exploitation of natural assets that leaves behind displacement, violence and dependency.







4

The National Front for the health of Peoples Ecuador- consisting of community and neighborhood leaders, homemakers, health workers, teachers, students and professionals- seeks to reaffirm the universal right to health and share experiences among social movements with a vision of change. Its mission is to contribute to social transformation, that is, we pretend to transform community from a passive object to start being an active subject and social agent capable of deliberation in the formulation of policies and the decision making process regarding their health problems.

(Declaration of principles of the National Front for the health of the peoples of Ecuador, 2004).

THE NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE HEALTH OF THE PEOPLES ECUADOR (FNSPE): BUILDING A HEALTHY WORLD

The National Front for the Health of the Peoples of Ecuador as an articulation strategy

In 2004 the National Front for the health of the peoples Ecuador, FNSPE, was established, as an organizational part of MSP Ecuador. It is playing an important role in social organization. FNSPE can be portrayed as one of the pillars of social movements in Ecuador along with the indigenous movements and the peasant movements.

Most, but not all fronts, have historical roots in the Marxist-Leninist ideologies and the workers' struggle against neo-colonial capitalist system. The best known are the Popular Front of the workers (FP), the FEUE and FESE organizations of university and secondary students, respectively. There is alsoa front of health workers (FTS), the National Teachers Union (UNE), the Confederation of Women for Change, the revolutionary youth (JRE) and the front of popular artists. The strategic idea of FNSPE has been to bring together the various fronts around the health issue, explains Edgar Isch, a leader in both the FNSPE and MPD, a leftist party (Democratic Popular Movement):

"We had a conception in which the first criterion was the human right to health, involving health professionals, but also environmentalists and educators. When FNSPE was born with these ideas, we break the hegemony of official science in order to understand the concept of health in a much more comprehensive and inclusive way. On the organizational side, we had two phases: a phase in which the network was convened to discuss with various organizations regarding specific campaigns on certain issues, but without constant presence of the FNSPE. In the second phase, in Guayas, Los Rios and other provinces, social activism nuclei were constituted, having a much more direct access to popular sectors, achieving a permanent presence in social actions in defense of the conditions of life. In the perception of people, FNSPE was a platform for actions and demands to the State in the health area".

(Edgar Isch, FNSPE and MPD, Quito)



FNSPE has its maximum visibility in the province of Guayas and in its capital, Guayaquil. Guayaquil's team organizes forums with other fronts that have campaigns around the health issue and local meetings to strengthen auto organization of communities to demand their rights:



"We did a project in collaboration with the Anglican Church: in fourteen different workshops with farmers, we talked about different issues, such as pandemics, AIDS, cervical cancer and the importance of clean water; above all we discussed with them about the right to health for all. We organized groups and people continue to debate about health in their area, free medicine, diseases that affect them most and their demands to the municipality and to the government".

(José Matias, JNSPE secretary, Guayaquil)

FNSPE team in Guayaquil conducts campaigns to advocate for free health care and for a local generic drug industry. They have organized Medical Brigades to work in poor neighborhoods of the city where there are no health centers. Last year brigades distributed basic medicines in neighborhoods affected by floods and storms; nets and medicines to combat dengue and malaria pandemics. Some people from FNSPE are working in universities of Guayaquil, Cuenca and Quito, having access to academic infrastructure to disseminate information and organize seminars. FNSPE president, Ricardo Ramirez, describes the structure of the organization at the provincial level:

"The FNSPE in Guayas holds meetings monthly. We have a rather broad team, including both doctors and nurses, as students and workers. On our network we organize all the people who need a better health system, and who are willing to fight to improve it where they live and where they work. In our structure we have a directive from various organizations. We have representatives in the directive. We take collective decisions on campaigns and actions.



Before making decisions, delegates will discuss with their communities".

(Ricardo Ramirez, FNSPE president, Guayaquil).

A recent initiative where FSNPE plays an active role is the establishment of a Front in Defense of IESS. IESS (Ecuadorian Social Security Institute) is the general system of social insurance in the country and has five levels: individual and family health insurance, pensions (disability, retirement, death), occupational risks insurance, the Peasants Social Security and insurance of the national administration. More than three million of people –near a quarter of the population- are covered by IESS.

Currently, the government has a fiscal deficit of four billion USD, which meant cutting funding for the IESS and privatizing part of the Social Security. The Front in Defense of the IESS demands the government the increase of state spending on social security and on health services, the improvement in those services, especially for patients facing catastrophic diseases, epidemics and diseases due to occupational hazards, and finally, the guarantee of pensions for retirees. According to Ricardo Ramirez the way the government is handling the IESS reflects the unjust economic and political system in the country:

"We are in the midst of the debate; analyzing the causes and roots of these problems. In essence, it is a problem of exploiters and exploited, but it is not simply an economics discussion. This struggle can also allow us to see the limits of this government, which is proclaiming the new socialism of the XXI century, but according to the facts, there are commonalities with the right wing and imperialism. With basic wages, workers contribute to social insurance via taxes, that is why we all have the same right to social security, the access to health services, and to receive medication and all that".

(Ricardo Ramirez, FNSPE, Guayaquil).



FNSPE does not have funds from any political party or government or any NGO, all of the activities are carried out with small self-financed funding.





"To mobilize, we have to finance the mobilization for ourselves. We are doing this via the people´s bag, with events and self-financed campaigns. The medicine we deliver is a friend-like medicine, it is not a gift from the state. We believe in a self-financing process, but that task is not easy. We get to do with our own funding, everything we do, in a proactive and dynamic way. It is a dynamic dialectic, we believe in people changing, we hope that each individual change and begin to understand that health is not something that can be purchased at the pharmacy, but a right that must be defended".

(Ricardo Ramirez, FNSPE, Guayaquil).



5

Health is a process that includes both, the biological and psychological dimensions of the individual, as well as the economic, political, cultural and environmental aspects, which are produced by the social determinants and expressed in the quality of life of a community and its members, and hence, in their health status.

Considering all the previous description of health, legislation regarding health problems and the right to health can not be reduced to the field of attention of illness and curative health care services, but must also cover the economic, political, cultural and environmental rights that make possible a healthy and fair society.

(The right to health Constitutional proposal from MSP Ecuador, 2007)

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH IN THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF ECUADOR

Network for the right to health in the Constituent Assembly

When the New Government took power in 2006, a process for drafting a New Constitution began. In the city of Montecristi, a series of assemblies where the New Constitution was being proposed, discussed, and finally formulated were organized.
Labor, peasant, indigenous, academic and women organizations formed a Network for the Right to Health in order to influence actively the debate around this process and eventually include in the New Constitution the right to health as a responsibility of State. Dr Jaime Breilh of the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (UASB) describes the process of network:

"One year prior to the Constitutional Assembly, we coordinated a core of analysis to convene a meeting of several organizations interested in participating in a debate regarding the New Constitution. We invited the MSP to be part of the network and the network supported the work of MSP. We were divided into six working groups on six major themes. We had several meetings with Alberto Acosta, president of the Constitutional Assembly, and other Assembly members. We worked a full year in these six themes, studying all the chapters of the New Constitution. There were several agreements in the network: to break with the notion that health was integrated into a single isolated chapter in the new constitution, and to understand the right to health as an entry point to talk about social and structural determinants of health. It meant to discuss a new social, legal and cultural order, to transcend the biomedical vision, from hospitals, pharmaceutical industries, etc. It was a very rich and intense process".

(Jaime Breilh, director of the health area, UASB, Quito)

The Network for the right to Health, as well as the MSP, participated actively in the meetings of the Constitutional Assembly in Montecristi:

"The Montecristi Assembly also formed working groups. We went to Montecristi and participated in these groups with all the preparation we had done with our six-axis. We had a basic document for discussion with the Assembly previously prepared. In a meeting with Alberto Acosta and other Assembly members, we made a presentation for the Constituent working groups. 70 percent of our proposals were incorporated in the New Constitution. Before concluding this process, we organized an international forum on Constitutional Processes on health in Latin America with the participation of people from Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, to discuss our achievements, with the experience of other struggles. These discussions enriched the document delivered to Alberto Acosta".

(Jaime Breilh, UASB, Quito)



Getting health as a human right included in the New Constitution is one of the greatest achievements of the MPS, as well as for all the other organizations and individuals of the Network for the Right to Health. Some of the key objectives of the MSP have been integrated into the New Ecuadorian Constitution. However,
the principles referred to in the New Constitution represent the State´s paper promises and have no legal force as laws. The MSP is still struggling for the attainment of these principles:

"But the principles in the Constitution have to be translated into specific laws. How? The Health Organic Law is not debated at the time; first they are discussing water, mining, education and food sovereignty laws. Therefore, we demand comprehensive primary health care and basic medicines for the population, to the Public Health Ministry".

(Nidia Solis, FSNPE and Secretary of School Nursing, Cuenca)









6

We are in a time when humanity faces the noise of consumerism that invades our privacy, that overtakes all spheres of life, creating magical solutions for everything and for all, for diseases, for solitude, for anxiety and for sadness; that makes up needs, buying consciences, destroying societies and imposing values.
Global warming history is the history of human intervention on the macro ecosystems. The history of bacterial resistance is the history of damage on the ecological microsystems -the oldest life form on the planet. There is however a difference between these phenomena. The first is a visible problem, the second a threat with an invisible face.

(Magazine ReActiva Number 5/ June 2008, pg. 2)

ACTION TOWARDS BACTERIAL RESISTANCE

In 2007 the ReAct Latin America (action against bacterial resistance) network was formed as a regional organizational part of global ReAct. Global React was born three years earlier at the University of Uppsala in Sweden, to investigate the determinants and causes of growing bacterial resistance.

This issue is especially important in Ecuador because bacterial infections (pneumonia, diarrhea, sepsis, etc) are the leading causes of death in children under one year. In addition, the problem of bacterial resistance mainly affects the most vulnerable populations, such as indigenous, peasant and rural communities. A central objective of the work of ReAct is expanding the spaces for debate about bacterial resistance to aspects of the use and abuse of antibiotics, which normally is only topic of discussion among experts in microbiology, pharmaceutics and medical sciences.



The severity of infectious diseases depends not only on medical but also on social aspects, such as malnutrition, poor sanitation and lack of economic resources. Inappropriate use of antibiotics occurs both in large scale cattle ranching and in treatment of bacterial Illnesses in humans. Using large amounts of antibiotics results in bacterial resistance in the human body and in adapted microorganisms that later spread on land and water. This means the imbalance of ecosystems.



Logically, ReAct Latin America reinforces the role of healthy ecosystems to refrain bacterial resistance, as well as, to improve living conditions for poor population. In addition, ReAct is focusing on cultural diversity to achieve new solutions in the area of prevention and treatment of bacterial infections. This means the integration of community wisdom and the worldview of indigenous peoples:



"For ReAct foundation, the vision of the indigenous peoples of South America was important, given that the concept of health is fully integrated, ecological and social. This vision is also important for the ecosystems in balance. The ecological , social, economical and political crisis seems like a civilization crisis. From this link, we are fighting for the defense of ecosystems and an ecological vision in health and in medical services".

(Klever Calle, communication coordinator ReAct Latin America, Cuenca)

Latin America ReAct office is located in the medical faculty of the University of Cuenca in Ecuador. Javier Peralta works as Science coordinator and Klever Calle as coordinator of communication. Additionally, a post graduate student, who does research aimed at the containment of antimicrobial resistance and appropriate use of antibiotics is part of the team. It is the first doctorate with this emphasis on Latin America.

Office coordinators are also very active in the MSP Ecuador. For them, goals ReAct work is directly linked with MSP objectives: universal access to treatment of bacterial infections and the struggle for healthy ecosystems are central aspects of the right to health for all.

"The basis of our work is theoretical, but the activities and objectives are very practical. We have three kinds of work: education, research and production of materials. We advance participatory research with communities, in another type of learning, focused on social determinants of health. We need to promote the training of health professionals in the Indigenous vision, a change in worldview as well as in the training curriculum, which is too biomedical in the moment".

(Klever Calle, ReAct, Cuenca)

Universal access to prevention and treatment of bacterial infections should be an integral part of Primary Health Care (APS in Spanish): comprehensive APS strategy would be the best contribution to the prevention of infectious diseases. In 2010 an international graduate program in comprehensive APS, with emphasis on infectious diseases, has been established. This is the first time a training, which has integrated these two aspects, is part of a medical school in Latin America:



"Once we finish the program in our faculty, the process, the materials and the results will be evaluated to turn it into a virtual program accessible to all professionals, organizations and institutions related with health care in Latin America".

(Arturo Quizhpe, general coordinator ReAct, MSP y FCCMM, Cuenca)

In 2008, after an international conference on Bacterial Resistance, Infectious Diseases, Community Solidarity and Ecosystems, a network of different organizations, scholars and activists in Latin America was formed. The network´s objectives are to increase social participation and to portray the social determinants in this issue. The memories of this conference include ideas and strategies for social participation, the ecological view and cultural diversity in those areas. (http://reactgroup.org/dyn/.62,,.html)





As in other local health programs, fighting bacterial resistance requires the participation of communities, both in the processes of formulation of problems, and in the solution proposals. That is even more valid from the ecosystem perspective because you cannot restore and maintain healthy ecosystems without input from the local population living in these ecosystems:

"We need the participation of local people in defining, planning, executing and evaluating all health issues. It is a debate about the perspectives for the containment of bacterial resistance, which occurs as a universal threat to life, and a discussion regarding comprehensive health strategies and the support of social, indigenous and peasants movements. The success of a program depends on the participation of communities".

(Klever Calle, ReAct, Cuenca)

In June 2009, a national seminar on Infectious Diseases: Diagnosis, Treatment and Appropriate use of Antibiotics was organized to inform professionals and health sciences` students. The meeting portrayed experts from the PAN AMERICAN Health organization (PAHO) and the IESS who gave conferences regarding antibiotics use, the increasing bacterial resistance and their connection to unbalanced ecosystems. It was a successful conference with more than 400 scholars and academics and included a critical analysis of the biomedical model. This event was organized with no funding from the pharmaceutical industry, which usually finances this type of scientific conferences:



"For both seminars, it was very important that we were not funded by pharmaceutical companies and that we stayed free from this influence. It is very important that we are independent because we're developing a different discourse. Besides the great contribution of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Central Bank of Ecuador, there were also many people who participated with their own resources. All of these are aspects of our financial architecture".

(Klever Calle, ReAct, Cuenca)



With healthy ecosystems as an integral part of the right to health, ReAct has common ground with the indigenous communities and peasant movements. It has established partnerships, especially with movements of the south east and south west of Ecuador, who defend their lands and their sovereignty against the threat of destruction produced by mining activities. With this collaboration, ReAct shows that an academic issue such as the containment of antimicrobial resistance has not only ecosystemic aspects, which should be integrated into research, but also involves concrete solidarity with the political struggles.



7

The Peasants Social Security (SSC), based on the principle of solidarity, subsidiarity and which is mandatory, is an insurance system for peasants and the members of their families, regardless of contracts of employment or wages. With this special feature, Ecuador is the only country that operates a social insurance system for the rural population without a dependency relation. Its establishment in the Pilot Plan took place in 1968 and in the four following decades, both the number of clinics and the number of members multiplied. In addition, the SSC incorporate the rural population to the pension system for retired peasants in 1981.

THE PEASANTS SOCIAL SECURITY (SSC): A TOOL FOR THE HEALTH OF ALL

We fight for a health system for all and for Social Security for all

Currently, the administration of the SSC is in hands of the Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security (IESS)), with approximately 2 million beneficiaries and 600 medical clinics.

Through the SSC, 18% of rural population has a health insurance (national average: 23%, figures for 2004). For vulnerable groups in Ecuador, the SSC is the central aspect regarding access to health care services and to social security for retirees.

"We are fighting for a health system for all and social security for all. A social insurance not dependent on payed labor is the best and our system is unique in this regard. Although primary health care (PHC) is very important, this concept works only as an element in sudden health needs and is implemented as a basic clinic for the poor, a low-quality medical care. But a social insurance is a strategy for all, the same type of coverage and the same quality of medical services for all, without regards of their economic status and guaranteed by the State. Health for all is the right to social security for all".

(Jaime Breilh, area heath director, UASB, Quito)



However, the Social Security is a system with permanent problems and the State does not fulfill its obligation to maintain it or to increase it. The most serious limitations are:

a) The debt held by the State, which totaled up to four billion dollars in 2010, causing cuts in payments to IESS, as well as to the beneficiaries of SSC.

b) Shortages of health professionals: physicians, dentists and nursing assistants and the lack of economic resources reflected in the low quality of health care services.

c) Although clinics offer free medicines, regularly those most needed are lacking and patients have to buy them in private pharmacies.





"We have medicine, but the same medicine for all pains. It has no quality to cure the patients. They [SSC] have not respected the law, which establishes that more than a 100 types of medicine should be available in clinics; only 16 drugs are available. Diclofenac for headaches, for all pains. A few days ago, in a press conference, a top leader of the IESS said: we don't need to give the peasantry medications, because people in the field are surrounded by many herbs to heal"

(Vicente Ortiz, president of the SSC affiliates´ association - Riobamba - Chimborazo)

Those are the reasons why, the beneficiaries of the SSC who have organized themselves in the United Federation of Peasant Social Security Affiliates (FEUNASSC), demand the implementation of the services needed and the improvement of the SSC system. The FEUNASSC demands: timely and complete delivery of medications in clinics, the establishment of new clinics with expanded schedules (more attention hours) and bigger medical teams, construction of new second and third level hospitals, and the improvement of the retirement pension.

MSP Ecuador also has played an active role in the defense of SSC given that a universal social insurance is a precondition of the right to health for all and that the access to health services is an integral part to the social production of health with democracy and participation. In some provinces as Riobamba and Pichincha, members of SSC associations are part of the MSP:





"We have been part of the People´s Health Movement, we have formed committees for the defense of health and we are spreading all materials that exist on the MSP. We are also part of the directives of the Health Front here in Ecuador; we met several times in a month to analyze what is currently happening, the information of the PHA and how are workshops being organized in other countries. We have always downloaded the information; we have also transmitted the information to each of the provinces in the committee of FNSPE. We are trying to inform people about the concept of health as a human right and train them in this aspect. In the same spirit, we are fighting for a future in which social security is an obligation of the State for the entire rural population. At the time, it is just a demand but we will fight to establish health as a universal right".

(Vicente Ortiz, SSC affiliate, Riobamba - Chimborazo)

The activities of the Association of SSC Affiliates in Imbabura are very similar to those of MSP: training of community health workers in the field, workshops on disease prevention, education of the rural population on pollution, waste disposal and malnutrition. Currently, the Association organizes events and demonstrations to denounce the neglect of the State´s obligations to the IESS:



"We have participated in strikes and marches, organizing struggles for our demands. We have had good medicine which has been decreasing in recent years. Last week we had a demonstration against the National Government´s appropriation of SSC money to cover the State´s deficit. We demand to be consulted as owners of the money. There is one authority, the IESS directive board, which takes the money without asking anything. Then, in the future we will have problems. Leaders inform people through the radio or through notifications and we did a significant demonstration".

(Vicente Ortiz, SSC affiliate, Riobamba - Chimborazo)

There is still 75% of the Ecuadorian population who has no health insurance. MSP claims for the integration of the various insurance organisms (IESS, SSC and others) to a Unified Health System (SUS- Sistéma Único de Salud) that guarantees the right to health for all the population.





Is not about to erase the political boundaries of existing States, but to build a policy where indigenous people can walk again in the living spaces they have built for millennia, without having a passport; walking together with the mestizo and Afro-descendants peoples.

(Jaime Idrovo/Dominique Gomis. Intercultural Health: perspectives from indigenous peoples and Afro descendent from Abya Yala. August 2010. ComunicándoNOS team.

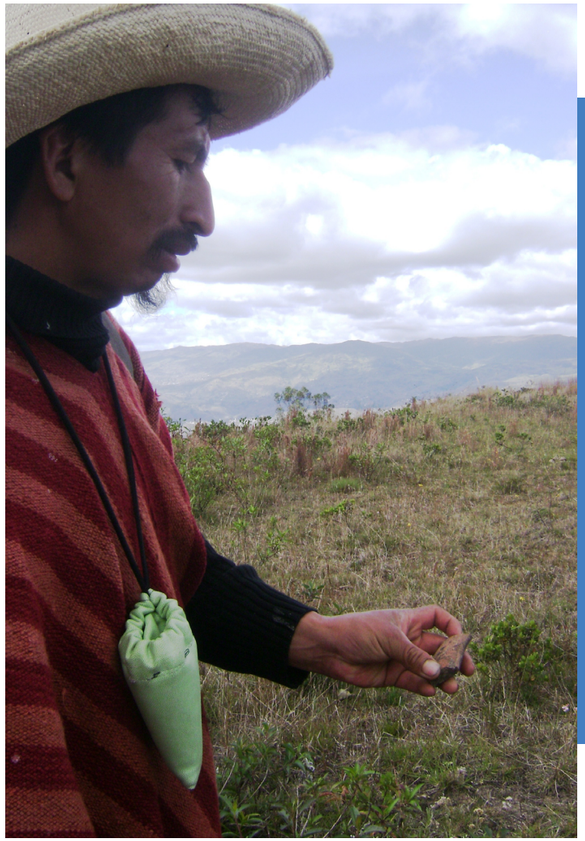
INTERCULTURAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE AND THE SOCIAL PARTICIPATION ISSUE

Ecuadorian people have a constitutional framework conducive to social participation in health since 2008. Examples of participatory actions are the Committees of Users (CUS, in the context of the Free Maternity Law), over 100 provincial and cantonal health councils, the existence of Basic Health Teams and the Conferences for Health and Life (COSAVI). A Sub-Secretariat of Health Promotion and Interculturality was established in the Public Health Ministry to support participatory processes in health. Cantonal programs with strategic plans and baselines have been launched and those should take into account the views of local people. Cantonal councils also have encouraged a more local-level organization: i.e.: parish councils and health community committees.

However, there are many factors that undermine autonomous participatory and solid processes. Although committees and councils are exchange spaces for the population and the government, they have no power or influence in the decisions made by politicians. Law-making processes lack the tools needed to include the rich discussions of the committees and the actions of the Ministry of Public Health continue to have a vertical nature. Community health programs are organized in a centralized fashion and thus, the councils simply do not know the activities of the Ministry of Public Health. Furthermore, health centers and health sub-centers carry are boud to carry out government programs with no input or participation of health promoters or from the committees.

"In what State processes in the health field is the population participating? There is a participation law, there is a peasants´ social insurance, there are clinics; but we are not participating in anything! They take their own decisions, but we as citizens are not participating. We are simply used in the organizational objectives of the institutions, but not in tune with the objectives of social movements".

(Ulises Freire, leader of intercultural coordination for the health of people, CSIP, Sigsig)



MSP Ecuador is working on various projects to strengthen community participation in health programs and in political decision-making processes regarding health. Examples of the aforementioned are the groups of Peasants ´Social Security Affiliates (SSC) and the Intercultural Coordinating Committee for the Health of the People (CSIP), in which community promoters from different parishes of a district meet. These people are both: health promoters, who organize prevention and health care programs for the population, and outreach workers, who try to support self-organization of communities and the demands for social participation in government decisions.

"The Ministry policy is vertical in nature. We have to generate, from social participation, the application of the right; the Constitution has to respond to our interests, the interest of the people. It is called Intercultural coordinating committee because we have to work on forms and formats of the professional world and of our own practices. We say "for health" instead of "of health" because we are fighting for health, we are not talking about recovery health services but about all dimensions of health, production, consumption, of health care. Lets not talk about the health coordinating committee for the institutions, but lets talk about the health of the people; we are the ones who have to put pressure for our rights to be implemented. We have the obligation to exercise this right. We have a CISP strategic plan, prepared in accordance with the constitution and the good living strategy, and the fight against poverty and for a development in harmony with the ecosystem".

(Ulises Freire, CISP, Sigsig)





The CISP is organizing training programs for community workers at the parrish level. Seminars take place regularly to provide a space for exchange regarding the local health situation, the development of health policy and the relationship with representatives of the municipality or the ministry. CISP promoters have conducted diagnostic programs in different communities to help at the local level and to coordinate with the government around the health needs in communities (i.e., they use the results of the diagnoses of cervical cancer to demand a program of sexual and reproductive health). In rural areas where there are no hospitals, health sub-centers are responsible for providing basic health care services. However, due to material, financial and personnel constraints, the sub-centers do not meet the needs of the population. Through collaboration among community promoters, participatory councils and local municipalities, the documentation of diseases and the treatment at the community-level take place.

For CISP promoters, only a genuine people's participation through participatory councils, User Committees and Affiliates ´Associations, could guarantee that state programs reflect the interconnected needs from the communities. It should also be valid for the new government initiative called Citizens´ Committees, through which the Government would try to improve collaboration and coordination at the cantonal level. The CISP is not opposed; instead it supports the idea of the Citizens´ Committees, in a very critical sense, demanding the transformation of vertical programs into horizontal processes.



"The strategic goal of the coordinating committee is to develop local communities policies based on the input from participatory health councils, in each parish, with inter-sectoral participation that allows the exercise of the right to health. Participation in decision-making at the local level, support for the administration and the effective use of the financial resources for the protection of health and life are also goals. Support health activities in a coordinated way while developing the Primary Health Care strategy and a comprehensive care model. PHC is implemented by the Ministry of Public Health or by the IESS, it is not in our hands, but we have to support it".

(Ulises Freire, CISP, Sigsig)

We fight for health; we work to ensure the satisfaction of basic social and economic needs, of all people. We conceive equity as a moral imperative and health as a social product which is built collectively, which requires a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach based on the solidarity between individuals and between peoples.

(Arturo Quizhpe- Health: the Transforming force of Life. Cuenca- Ecuador. April 2007)



The Health Action Network

Despite the organizational weakness of MSP Ecuador in the capital, there are some initiatives in Quito with the same objectives and similar strategies of MSP.
Those actions were initiated around the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (UASB). Dr. Jaime Breilh, Director of the Health Area at UASB, is the general coordinator of this network. The network has organized discussions about the situation of public health in Ecuador and about the right to health for the population; it has collected proposals and conducted public policy analysis, especially of the Ecuadorian government´s health policy in the last decade.



The network consists of 65 civil society organizations and nearly 100 health activists in areas that include a variety of topics such as: environment, generic medicines, intercultural health, health economics, free trade agreements, food sovereignty, participation and social control, among others.

(Erika Arteaga, co-coordinator of the health action network, UASB, Quito)

The Health Action Network presented a proposal in six themes for the New Constitution. As a part of the Network for the right to health, they have achieved the integration of the social determinants perspective and the right to health perspective, in the New Constitution. Activities in 2006, 2007 and 2008 have resulted in national collaborations with organizations in other areas, social movements, politicians and other health networks, such as MSP.

Nowadays, various academicians, public sector servants and NGOs technicians participate in the activities of the network. In recent years it has worked with the Committees of Users of Free Maternity care Law, with Associations of Peasantsl Social Security Affiliates of Quito and the Northern provinces of the country, and with the National Movement Women for Life: a movement that is organizing women in marginal urban neighborhoods of the country. Currently, the Women for Life Movement has conducted a survey of quality (sensed quality) in 8 public health care services in Quito and Cuenca. Additionally, the Health Action Network launched with fos (Belgian Socialist Solidarity) an event at the end of 2010, that tried to integrate the Women for Life Movement and ALAMES (Latin American Association in Social Medicine) in the debate regarding the right to health and social security in Ecuador.





Our planet is undergoing a major environmental crisis as result of a predator production system, with macroeconomic growth, development, progress and other fallacies as a pretext, it has led to massive impoverishment and exclusion of the population and to social injustice, to the destruction of ecosystems, to the commoditization of life while appropriating of biodiversity and of ancestral knowledge, disregarding our cultures, and imposing their model of consumerism and unsustainable lifestyles.

Declaration of People for the Life, Cuenca January 2007

MSP AND FNSPE SUPPORT TO THE ANTI-MINING STRUGGLE

Below, the development of the mining sector and the situation of the anti-mining movement in Ecuador are described. In recent years, MSP Ecuador has worked intensively on this issue, including ways of collaboration with movements fighting against mining.

Popular resistance in Jimbitono and El Pangui were the first major success against mining activities in 2006. MSP Ecuador contributed as a platform for convening a National Assembly of communities' victims of the negative effects of mining, from which the national network of anti-mining struggles emerged, The National Coordinating Committee for the Defense of Life and Sovereignty, CNDVS.

"In 2007 the MSP along with other popular organizations convened communities who were facing mining to develop a meeting, a large meeting to discuss the problems that mining companies can cause; the meeting was attended by thousands, including people from other countries who contributed with evidence of the fatal consequences of this activity. In this meeting the CNDVS was born, a coordinating committee for the anti-mining struggle. This coordinating committee makes visible the problems of mining in the country, generating multiple actions: two national uprisings which resulted in 70 fellow partners' imprisoned and accused of terrorism. Communities' struggle was intense and massive. At this time, the New Constitution was being discussed in Montecristi. Thanks to these popular uprisings, the National Assembly decreed a mining mandate that stopped mining concessions; unfortunately this mandate was not fulfilled ever".

(Jorge Quizhpe, ComunicándoNOS, Cuenca)

MSP ComunicándoNOS office in Ecuador took an active role in the coordinating committee: they provided the infrastructure for communication among organizations, producing and distributing informational materials about the CNDVS. Unfortunately CNDVS strength has weakened, due to the difficulty in maintaining the collaboration among organizations.



Currently, there is still some regional coordinating committees and hopefully CNDVS would recover. Also, since 2009, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE, has been involved in the fight against mining. Historically, indigenous peoples had done small scale mining. Later, in the centuries of colonialism, large scale mining takes place primarily in indigenous areas. Today, the most interesting areas for mining companies are those where indigenous populations are concentrated. Logically, indigenous communities are the ones that have being displaced and have suffered from land and water pollution and the destruction of their forests and mountains. To face the Ecuadorean government plans that envision the launching of large-scale mining activities; there is the need, more than ever, to establish partnerships between movements and the national anti-mining struggles:





"For me, the first task is to provide arguments to the struggle: how you can deal with it without knowing mining examples of other countries, because we have not had large scale mining. That is a very relevant task which can give strength to the struggle. The second task is to contribute with a human rights-based logic: rights here have been seen as gifts or favors from the State: "thanks to the government, because it gave me a health center". But you have to change the point of view and enforce the struggle for the right to defend your life. In that sense, the issue of health is central not only in relation to the question of the health of human beings, but also the health of ecosystems as an enforcement of the rights of nature The third task is the direct support to the struggles, not only to the big ones, but also to the small ones: i.e. in Guayas the struggle against the pollution of their rivers is very significant".

(Edgar Isch, FNSPE y MSP, Quito)



The Mining Mandate, or the agreement on the mining policy discussed in the Assembly included:

- Cessation of the mining concessions that do not comply with obligations established under other laws;
- Restriction of mining activities in protected areas and in water sources;
- Overturning of concessions given to former officials of the Ministry Of Energy And Mines;
- Creation of a state mining company to maintain mining operations with better social and environmental conditions, to organize the sector without dependence on transnational corporations and to help with technology and funding to small scale miners.

However, neither the New Mining Law of 2009, nor the practices of the Government of President Correa meet those standards. They continue to give concessions that contradict the Mandate, allowing the extraction of mineral in highland areas with fragile ecosystems and providing no protection for threatened communities or fair compensation to the already affected ones. There are no visible activities of state enterprises than can establish alternative forms of extraction and cause less damage. All of this is done, while transnational corporations continue exploration activities and prepare to exploit.

The largest mining projects in exploration phase in Ecuador are:

- Rio Blanco (IMC), 6000 concession hectares, estimated reserves (RES): 4 million ounces of silver.
- Quimsacocha (IAMGOLD), 12000 hectares, RES: 3 million ounces of gold, 18 million ounces of silver.
- Condor (Aurelian), 95000 ha, RES: 13 million ounces of gold and 22 million ounces of silver.
- Mirador (Ecuacorriente/Corrient Resources), 64000 ha, RES: 180 million tons of copper.



Reserves figures are based on estimates of the companies involved. Until there are no independent and reliable studies, these figures must be assumed to be oversized because the companies want to attract investment and credit. The investment in the mining sector focuses on Canadian companies: Corrient Resources, IMC, Iamgold and Aurelian come from Canada. If these figures had been correct, the mining potential would equate 70% of the current value of oil reserves of the country (1.4 billion dollars).

In the recent book by Alberto Acosta (2009: The Curse of Abundance) some figures on the production of waste and water consumption are presented: in the case of copper, over 95% of the original rock removed becomes waste; in the case of gold, an ounce (extraction done with the best technology) will produce 28,000 kilograms of waste (13 million ounces of gold waiting in the Condor project would produce more than 350 billion kilograms of waste). One ounce of gold requires 8,000 liters of water, one ton of copper contaminates between 10,000 and 70,000 liters of water (depending on the source of information).

"Regarding the impact of extractivism there are three myths: first that there is clean technology; second that extractivism creates jobs, while destroying agriculture and livestock, in fact it destroys more than creates; and third, the idea of development, growth and progress through the exploitation of natural resources. That is in the mindset of the people and it is difficult to stop this conviction.. First, you have to justify why you are against the new extractive model since the government tries to show that the income is spent in education and social insurance; there is no alternative but to break illusions about the extractivism".

(Edgar Isch, FNSPE y MPD, Quito)

For MSP the connection between mining and health is of great significance: open pit mining causes serious environmental impacts such as pollution of land, air and water; both at the time of exploitation and many years after the mining operations ended. Facilities destined to try to minimize environmental pollution can be built, but in rainy weather or during El Niño, these facilities can burst or break. The devastation of surfaces, the modification of the morphology and course of rivers, the formation of large debris accumulates pollutes water and rivers near the mines. Tenguel case is an example of the destruction resulting from mining activities.

A) Popular resistance in Jimbitono and El Pangui

Hydroabanico Company Inc.built a hydroelectric dam, on the river near Jimbitono town in Morona Santiago province. The hydroelectric dam generated electricity for the needs of industrial production in Guayaquil, especially for Coca Cola and KFC companies. Technically, to generate 15 megawatts of electricity, Hydroabanico decanted 5 cubic meters of river to another river range. This resulted in the absence of water along the first river with negative effects on irrigated land and the increase of water along the second river, with severe impacts destroying land, livestock and fisheries. In August 2006, all local communities became aware of environmental problems caused by Hydroabanico. Jimbitono´s population organized against the second phase of the dam construction, which will result in much more water deviation, due to the double amount of electricity required to supply the mining transnational corporations (Ecuacorriente/Corrient Resources, Lowell, BHP Billiton). These companies are carrying out the exploitation of minerals in the neighboring province, Zamora Chinchipe. At the same time, there were plans to develop the construction of a 250 km power lines by the company Sipetrol (linked to Hydroabanico) to bring electricity to mining sites.

(MSP Ecuador 2007: Jimbitono, A Freedoms Yell)



Hydroabanico project also has an important international aspect: part of the funding for this project comes from the World Bank, who runs a so-called "clean development mechanisms (CDM)" from the Netherlands (Holland). Hydroabanico, according to the criteria of the Kyoto Protocol, is a clean energy project in a developing country, investment in this project discounted CO2 emissions of industrialized countries. That is the idea of the services of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), a program of the Kyoto Protocol. Holland is making investments in Hydroabanico to offset any emissions in their industry. The truth is not only the electricity generated by Hydroabanico is a dirty energy because of its environmental impacts, but also Hydroabanico provides electricity to mining companies (not for the public network) to facilitate a dirty industry, exploiting copper and gold in an opencast way.



Through a 75 days strike, Jimbitono communities closed the main road to Riobamba, demanding the suspension of the second phase of Hydroabanico and payment of compensations to communities affected by the destruction of the first phase. After five weeks of strike, community activists faced a series of violent attacks by the army, police and Sipetrol and Hydroabanico workers. The attacks prompted an increase in Jimbitono popular uprising.

Meanwhile, an International Forum for anti-mining struggles was organized in El Pangui. At the end of the forum, the participants were called for a march of solidarity with Jimbitono. Hundreds of people came to Jimbitono and formed a committee to defend the life of Morona Santiago and to articulate the fight against Hydroabanico hydroelectric project with the fight against Current Resources mining company.





In November 2006, the protests peaked when the President sent his Work Minister to the popular assembly in Macas: a meeting with officials of the government of the two provinces and some community leaders. The whole Assembly approved the Act of Commitment to the most important agreements: the immediate and permanent suspension of the second phase of the project Hydroabanico and the discontinuation of mining activities of Current Resources in Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe. However, companies, especially Current Resources, did not stop mining activities. The Popular Assembly decided to stop these activities with direct actions on the company facilities and faced afterwards Human Rights abuses and violent attacks, resulting in injuries and arrests.

B) Tenguel the disastrous results of mining

In Tenguel, a parish of the province of Guayas, everyone can see the consequences of mining activities as serious contamination of rivers in the area. Water is loaded with heavy metals such as arsenic, chromium, vanadium and mercury. These heavy metals provoke reactions and damage to internal organs of humans; it also produces the loss of all fish in the rivers. Esther Landeta, an activist who has organized community resistance in Tenguel for years, describes the impacts:

"People have a lot of respiratory problems, stomach problems, allergies and skin diseases. Children and elderly people specially, develop cancer. Clean water means health, without clean water the population suffers a lot".

(Esther Landeta, activist of communitarian resistance of Tenguel)



Mining activities take place mostly at high altitudes in the mountains of the neighboring province, Azuay. The fields of small scale miners and mining companies as ORENAS- the largest in the region- are located in the mountains where large amounts of water are used in the gold extraction process. There are pools of contaminated water already used in the process. Pools have been built with minimum security: a plastic layer serves as protection. There are often spills of polluted waters flowing to the land and the rivers located within a few meters distance. There are four rivers that are born in these mountains and flow through parish of Tenguel.



'Here is the Chico River, above, it is almost dead, all poisoned, is useless. Mining impacts on health and nature, land becomes infertile. Look the color of the river. Sometimes the water of the rivers is red or blue due to all the poison. Despite the fact that the rivers carried the red water, the tests came back negative and they pretend that there is no pollution in the rivers. Tests are never going to come out positive because the miners pay the exams, we should pay for the exams to get a positive result".

(Esther Landeta, activist of communitarian resistance of Tenguel)

In 2007 the municipality of Guayaquil published an independent study. According to this study, the concentration of heavy metals in the four rivers exceeds the permitted limits: from 7 times more for arsenic up to 265 times more for mercury, a highly toxic metal. The rivers carry waste from the mines to the most productive agricultural area of the country: the coast of the Gulf of Guayaquil, where shrimp, bananas and cocoa (organic and conventional products) are grown; a great quantity of those is exported to other continents. Cultivation of these crops consumes large quantities of water; therefore, these products for consumption and export contain heavy metals.

EIn the same year, the National Assembly for the Defense of Our Rivers was born, demanding the urgent cancellation of mining concessions in the area of Ponce Enriquez. Repeatedly inspections of the mining area have been carried out by the direction of mining of Azuay. However, the pollution of the rivers continues.



However, more and more critical voices say it is essential to review the mining practices in the country, particularly before carrying out the government's plans under President Correa. Currently the government tries to establish large-scale mining. The mining law of 2009 facilitates the delivery of concessions to mining companies and shows no reconsideration of the practice.

Tenguel popular resistance has faced intimidation by mining companies and by the regional government. Esther Landeta confronts constant threats from the mining companies, she can only move with police escort. Intimidation is a major problem to organize communities and to maintain an effective resistance.



"I do not speak out, people say, because it is a bit risky. If they speak they fear for threats, so they prefer to keep quiet. The Environmental Prosecutor came to us and asked which symptoms they had, "nothing happens, we're well", people remain silent. There is threat everywhere; often people do not talk, for fear".

(Esther Landeta, activist, Tenguel)

c) UNAGUA, anti-mining resistance in Quimsacocha

Since the eighties, Ecuador started a process of private and foreign investment to develop large-scale mining. For 10 years the Ecuadorian governments have given a huge amount of concessions; nearly 20% of Ecuadorian territory is destined for mining exploitation. IAMGOLD, a Canadian company, has acquired concessions to exploit gold deposits in thousands of hectares in Quimsacocha, an area at 3000 m. of altitude.



All the land has been granted in concession to IAMGOLD, not only land but also water, the high grassland, lagoons, and everything that is down. But those are communal lands of the whole population, public lands for centuries. And all of this is being granted in concession to IAMGOLD".

(Carlos Perez, president of UNAGUA, Quimsacocha)

Quimsacocha is the most valuable reserve of gold in terms of quantity and quality in Ecuador. With a projection of three million ounces of gold, the State will receive nealry 800 million dollars in taxes. Currently, IAMGOLD is exploring the field with machines and measuring the amount of subterranean gold in 200 meters. In addition, the company carries out preparations to build the employees house. The operations have not begun yet.





In the area there are no affected populated zones, but the open-pit mining is a highly polluting practice and it means a serious threat to the fragile ecosystem of this region. In other countries, such as in Colombia, no mining activities are permitted at an altitude of over 2000 meters. Quimsacocha contains a large quantity of water sources and the two largest rivers in the province of Azuay, passing through Cuenca, the capital of the province, are born there. With the aim of protecting the ecosystem and communal property, communities in Victoria del Portete, Tarqui, San Gerardo and Girón have organized a prolonged and persistent popular campaign to halt the plans of IAMGOLD mining activities:

"The source of the Tarqui River, one of the four rivers that flow through Cuenca, is located in Quimsacocha. This body of water, before joining theTarqui, forms the river Ilquis, from which we have water for irrigation, animals, and to 1200 families in Tarqui and Victoria Del Portete. Right here, we are denouncing that water for industrial use will be destined for our consumption. We are concerned that when mining comes, all these sources of water, sources of life, will be ended. This is why we are fighting for water, for life. It is the fight of our partners and all people. We will achieve victory with the determination of people that stick together. We have completed six years of struggle and we will follow six more years".

(Carlos Pérez, UNAGUA, Quimsacocha)



Ecuador's government- as well as other "XXI century socialism" governments in Venezuela and Bolivia- has increased social programs budgets. These budgets are funded by taxes on exports of natural resources such as oil, minerals and metals. In recent debates, that is called "new extractivism" (Eduardo Gudynas 2009: Ten Urgent Theses on the New Extractivism). Facing the fact that the oil in Ecuador gradually wears off, President Correa tries to facilitate large scale mining of metals and minerals. His argument to win Ecuadorian population´s approval is that extractive activities allow national economic development and cover the costs of education, health and housing programs that benefit the entire population.

Opposition groups have been insulted by the President as "infantile environmentalists". In an authoritarian manner, the government has criminalized the leaders of the anti-mining struggle and is trying to divide the indigenous movement and affected communities. A recent example: the state repression to the protests against the approval of the new water law in May 2010:





'Many people are being persecuted for this struggle; they are criminalized, accused of terrorism. Extractivism requires conditions that only authoritarian governments can provide. You do not find either in Latin America or in Africa a democratic country with extractive practices. This relationship is valid also in Ecuador. If you say Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador have progressive governments, you are right; but when it comes to extractive activities, they portray themselves as authoritarian governments. And there are no new forms of extractivism because for the population, for the peasants and in a health context, the extractivism today means the same disaster as in the previous decades".

(Edgar Isch, MPD y FNSPE, Quito)

The proposal of a new Water Resources´ law has caused serious conflicts and has been portrayed as a contradiction to the New Constitution. The Constitution points out that water management will be exclusively public or communitarian; the new law will allow the privatization of water. The Constitution states that energy sovereignty will not be reached at the expense of food sovereignty; the new law would favor the productive use of water by mining and industrial production at the expense of rural and communal agriculture. Social movements that protested in the streets have demanded to prohibit all forms of water privatization, the guarantee of the human right to water and the rights of nature -which has been one of the paradigmatic achievements in the New Constitution-

"We want the water law, but a water law for life; a law that guarantees its use for humans, and also for industry. Our struggle in southern Ecuador is that these 2 million of high land grasses remain free from mining activities. For example, in Colombia, you cannot do mining activities in an altitude of more than 2000 meters, on high land grasses. We just ask that. And why are we asking that? We ask to have water for ourselves and for our children.



We are convinced that big changes are done by the people, the collectives, not by presidents; we are hundreds and thousands of water struggle owners, we are doing this so that our children can enjoy the benevolence of nature".

(Carlos Perez, UNAGUA, Quimsacocha)



MSP- LA CALL:

We call to the people and urge the governments of the region, to fight and work towards:

- Reinforcement of health as a fundamental human right, as result of the interaction of the social, economic and environmental determinants.
- Revitalization of the national and international community commitment to achieve Health for All, according to Alma Ata, signed in 1978.
- To establish effective channels of communication in order for the organized people, the professional unions, the talent training institutions involved in health can partici pate in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of health services.
- To guarantee that the health sector transformation meets the needs of the population and responds to the Constitutional text and to principles of good living Those princi ples as they were originally conceived and not only in discourse.
- To secure resources for universal, equitable, decent and quality access to health servi ces for all, in prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and health promotion.
- Allocate adequate resources for health research and production of generic drugs un der state control.
- Adopt public policies to ensure adequate, well educated, protected staff, which is trai ned under the principles of right to health.

MSP CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Collaboration between the MSP Latin-American Net-

The last internal meeting of MSP Latin American took place around the UISP (International University for the Health of the People) in Guatemala, April 2010.
65 participants, students and professionals in the area of health and representatives of indigenous communities, learn, "unlearn" and exchanged ideas on issues related to intercultural health. The MSP Latin America communication team was involved in UISP to interview and record testimony of participants. They were also involved in the production of three videos and a book

(Idrovo/Gomis 2010: Health Intercultural Perspectives from Indigenous Peoples and Afro descendents from Abya Yala, published in August 2010, download www.phmovement.org.es).

After UISP, the representatives of Argentina, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela and Guatemala, met to evaluate their work and discuss new communication projects for MSP Latin American:



"We want our own media for the MSP Latin America network.. During the last meeting of the communication team we decided to launch a radio and popular television project in the health area, broadcasting on the Internet. In Ecuador, Argentina, Colombia, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Mexico and Guatemala there are teams that want to start a project of popular radio and television. We will do it, I don't know how, but there is the decision and that is important".

(Jorge Quizhpe, ComunicándoNOS, Cuenca)



The concept of the UISP was also discussed. It was the fifth UISP in Latin America since 2005. The annual realization of a UISP seems to be very positive. It has succeeded in spreading the prospect of a struggle for the right to health between advocates and activists who work in medical services or influencing health policies. However, the organizational work for continental UISP was intense and consumed much of the human and financial resources of the Latin-American MSP network. The central issue of debate was to establish to what extent the collaborative process undertaken by the UISPs strengthens the structures of MSP.

"We need to monitor, evaluate and make a compilation of the materials. We need teams in each region, supporting the struggle for the right to health, which is linked to the movement, and participating in national and regional projects".

(Arturo Quizhpe, dean of FCCMM, Cuenca)





"UISP courses could be virtual in nature; participants receive technical tools to participate in video conferences. This ensures wider participation, dissemination of materials and at the same time saving money. A virtual university as a space between multiple organizations and nobody has to travel with a lot of time and money".

(Nidia Solis, FSNPE and secretary of Nursing School, Cuenca)

A new agenda for the MSP Ecuador

As mentioned earlier, one of the MSP Ecuador network problems is its invisibility in some of the provinces and in the capital of the country. In the same way, the national MSP program would need a campaign to make visible the government's unwillingness to fulfill its constitutional obligations to improve the health situation of the population:

"Following the seminar in September 2009, there was no continuation of cooperation. We do not have a common struggle agenda, we stand, we are involved in many specific struggles, as against the laws of water and mining, but there is a continuing agenda. We need a national congress of Ecuador MSP to decide on a new agenda. We need to build an agenda that also reflects the changes of recent years, the policy of the new government, neoliberalism and the new post extractivism".

(Jaime Breilh, director UASB, Quito)



Others propose a development of network structures: the FNSPE could provide steps toward an organization that manages different cantonal offices and regional coordinators:

"The problem is we have not moved the FNSPE -an organizational structure- to have a presence in the provinces. In the national level there is fixed structures of FNSPE, but in the provinces there is not. There is a lack of human resources to work even more in communities by promoting the right to health".

(Vicente Ortiz, president of SCC, Riobamba - Chimborazo)



Moreover, we could compile the training of community promoters. A new approach to their training should to be connection between environment and health. Also, learning the tools to carry out research with local communities and strengthen the articulation of the voices of the bases should be considered:



"Training events could be national and regional: there is the urge to train the promoters, collecting testimonies of the community, search for scientific research on the situation of the rights of nature and health in the broadest sense. The promoters team needs academic information to develop research and contacts with movements and networks to collect testimonies. All that work, unified, could be the source of a "Health Observatory In Latin America", a collection of analytical evidence".

(Arturo Quizhpe, general coordinator of MSP Ecuador and dean of FCCMM, Cuenca)

MSP is also considering a popular communication campaign: the distribution of information on social aspects of health accessible to indigenous communities. These two projects would improve the presence of MSP in the provinces.

"To produce materials more suitable for the bases, materials in a vernacular language, culturally accepted. It must also include the translation in kichwa. Especially when Global Health Watch 3 is released, we could produce popular brochures in kichwa. It Is necessary to include other forms of communication, more dynamic, more interactive, in fact we're doing this now, there is a rich production, in print, audio, video, multimedia, we've also made two short films with cartoons. For example, in the case of MSP Argentina there are professionals who made documentaries; they produce great video series. That is the reality of the MSP, play according to their abilities and each country has to generate its own resources and funds".



(Jorge Quizhpe, ComunicándoNOS, Cuenca)

Observing human rights in anti-mining struggles

As mentioned earlier, the mining of metals will increase to a large-scale industry, which will become strategically important for the government of Ecuador. Therefore, more mining projects are expected in the coming years, especially in the south of the country. State repression against indigenous resistance were observed, which is directed against the mining law and water in the past two years. This repression includes the accusation of terrorism against many movement leaders and activists involved in strikes. Taking into account the government's reaction to popular resistance, the increased number in human rights violations by the state in the near future should worry us.

"We could establish a communications network and popular human rights observers. That we need urgently and MSP may be integrated into this project. We need rights observers here in the south; water law showed us that we need more support in legal issues. Movements lack to logistical supply and MSP could be provided it through the equipment of popular communications and with economic and human resources".

(Klever Calle, communicator coordinator ReAct Latin America, Cuenca)



Similar to the idea of training community workers to document the issue of health and environment, a key initiative for the future, will be the establishment of a popular communicators team, which would document social movements and respond to the mining activities and other mega projects.



"Visualize the criminalization of the struggle in different parts of the region, through the record of: testimonies, reports, documents, producing and disseminating materials, strengthening the communication itself. As, for example, in the fight against mining, on one of the manifestations a student was arrested, she was accused of terrorism, the police claimed that the student had been firebombed in his backpack, the version of the student and his companions was that the police put them in there, in front of this fact the deans of law and medicine went on hunger strike in solidarity with the student, this brave, convening and mobilizing action, was an instrumental in getting the student freedom. Events such as, shows the need to build a group of human rights observers with a broad vision, not sectarian, but of unity, we propose the formation of a core of human rights and the rights of nature and in that scope the right to health. This is an action".

(Arturo Quizhpe, MSP y FCCMM, Cuenca).

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